

REMARKS

The Examiner has indicated that claims 16-38 are allowed, and that claims 2-5 and 9-15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants acknowledge and appreciate this statement. At this time, Applicants elect to keep claims 2, 9, and 15 in dependent form pending the Examiner's response to the remarks submitted herein. However, claim 9 has been amended to correct the informality cited by the Examiner. Claim 20 has also been amended, as it included a similar informality. Claims 7, 11, 18, 25, 30, and 32 have been amended to correct other minor informalities found by Applicants. Entry of these amendments and withdrawal of the pending objection to claim 9 are respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 6-8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Pack. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection for at least the reason that Pack neither discloses nor suggests at least determining a first level of correction for a mask design layout for a predetermined parametric yield with a minimum total correction cost.

Looped steps 110, 112, 114, 108, and 110 are cited in the Office Action for determining a first level of correction for a mask design layout for a predetermined parametric yield. However, these steps relate not to determining a level of correction for a mask design layout, but to inspecting a mask that has been written (see step 106) for defects, and to physically repairing the defects if feasible. Such defect repair may be performed for example, using ion beam milling (paragraphs 0061 and 0062). Pack recognizes the use of

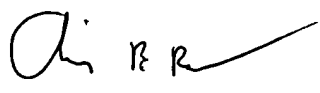
resolution enhancement technology (RET). However, in Pack, RET features are added to the mask design layout 102, typically just prior to tape out (for example, see paragraph 0032).

Further, regarding dependent claim 6, steps 110, 112, 114, 108, and 110 are again cited for teaching determining whether a second level of correction is required. However, as with claim 1, these steps relate to repairing a defect in a written mask (step 106), not to determining a level for RET in a mask design layout.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1 and 6-8 are allowable over the references of record, including Pack. Applicants thus respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The Examiner is request to contact Applicants' attorney at the below-listed number if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,
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